

Message Text

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TAGS: OREP, (DIGGS, CHARLES)

SUBJ: CODEL DIGGS

SUMMARY. CODEL HAD SUCCESSFUL VISIT LIBREVILLE JULY 10-13, MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO FOR 65 MINUTES, PRIME MINISTER MEBIAME AND MINISTER OF PLAN ANCHOUEY. VISIT RECEIVED EXCELLENT LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE, GAVE CODEL GOOD PICTURE OF THINKING AT TOP LEVEL OF GABONESE GOVERNMENT, AND SERVED TO EMPHASIZE TO GABONESE CONTINUED U.S. INTEREST IN GABON, PARTICULARLY IN ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL AREAS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 11, CODEL WAS RECEIVED FOR 65 MINUTES BY PRESIDENT BONGO. PRESIDENT, WHO WAS VERY ANIMATED AND HUMAN THROUGHOUT, INITIALLY DISCUSSED JUST COMPLETED TRIP TO ROMANIA AND FAR EAST AND REASONS WHY HE HAD NOT GONE TO NORTH KOREA (SEPTEL). PRESIDENT THEN DECLARED THAT U.S.-GABONESE RELATIONS WERE EXCELLENT. THERE WERE SEVERAL ASPECTS TO THESE RELATIONS. IN FIRST PLACE, THERE WERE VERY STRONG ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL TIES. PRIVATE AMERICAN BUSINESS INTEREST AND ACTIVITY IN GABON HAD RECENTLY INCREASED REMARKABLY AND THERE WOULD BE MORE PROJECTS FOR AMERICANS IN FUTURE. SECONDLY, ENGLISH WAS BECOMING FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE OF GABON (FRENCH BEING NATIONAL LANGUAGE) AND WAS INCREASINGLY TAUGHT IN GABON'S SCHOOLS. THIRDLY, THERE WERE HUMAN ASPECTS. GABONESE KNEW THAT LARGE PART OF AMERICAN POPULATION WAS BLACK AND TRACED ITS ANCESTRY TO AFRICA. THUS GABON HAD NATURAL ATTRACTION TO AMERICA.

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3. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS RESPONDED THAT GABON HAD MADE GREAT PROGRESS SINCE HE HAD LAST VISITED IN 1971 AND PRESIDENT BONGO'S STATURE HAD LIKEWISE INCREASED ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS SAID HE KNEW GABON WAS OPEN TO INVESTMENT FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES, HE BELIEVED AMERICAN PRIVATE ENTERPRISE COULD MAKE GREAT CONTRIBUTION TO GABON, AND HE HOPED THAT AMERICAN COMPANIES WOULD RECEIVE FUTURE PROJECTS. DOMESTICALLY, AMERICAN BLACKS WERE MAKING INCREASING STRIDES NOT ONLY IN AREA OF BUSINESS BUT ALSO, AS CASE OF HIMSELF AND CONGRESSWOMAN COLLINS PROVED, IN GOVERNMENT. THIS BODES WELL FOR INCREASED COOPERATION BETWEEN AFRICA AND U.S.

4. PRESIDENT THEN GAVE LONG DISCOURSE ON NEED FOR DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES. ONLY BY TALKING CAN PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND MAKE JUDGMENTS ABOUT EACH OTHER. THIS WAS WHAT PEOPLE LIKE NORTH KOREANS DID NOT REALIZE. IDEOLOGIES AND SLOGANS MEANT NOTHING. DIALOGUE WAS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE RESULTS AND PEACE. BONGO STATED THAT HE WAS PRAGMATIC AND THAT FOR HIM, MONEY HAD NO SMELL. IF SOMEONE WANTED TO DO BUSINESS, HE WAS READY, AS LONG AS THEY DID NOT TRY TO GET INVOLVED IN GABON'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE ONLY EXCEPTION WAS WHEN DEALING WITH COUNTRIES THAT PRACTICED APARTHEID AND DID NOT RECOGNIZE THAT BLACK SKIN HAD VALUE. BONGO SAID THAT GABON WAS OPEN COUNTRY AND THAT GABONESE HAD NO SECRETS. ALL AMBASSADORS HAVE HIS PHONE NUMBER AND BONGO TELLS THEM TO CALL HIM IF THEY HAVE PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS. YET SOME AMBASSADORS -- AND HE KNOWS THEY HAVE A JOB TO DO -- SPEND HUGE SUMS OF MONEY TRYING TO FIND OUT SECRETS WHEN IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER JUST TO ASK PRESIDENT. AND, IN ANY EVENT, THE PEOPLE AMBASSADORS PAY JUST COME TO PRESIDENT AND TELL HIM.

5. PRESIDENT BONGO ALSO DISCUSSED IDEOLOGIES AND LARGE NUMBER OF COUP D'ETATS IN AFRICA. MANY AFRICAN LEADERS SO INTERESTED IN IDEOLOGIES AND REVOLUTION THAT THEY FORGOT ABOUT NEEDS OF PEOPLE. WHAT INDIVIDUAL DOES NOT THINK HE IS AS CAPABLE AS THE NEXT AND COULD SERVE AS PRESIDENT? IF LEADER FORGETS PEOPLE, THESE PEOPLE

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WILL ATTEMPT COUP D'ETAT. PRESIDENT SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT PROBLEM IN GABON AND MENTIONED THREE DIFFERENT TIMES THAT HE HAD NOT COME TO POWER BY COUP. PRESIDENT SAID HE UNDERSTOOD HIS COUNTRY, HAVING SERVED NOT ONLY AS PRESIDENT, BUT IN ARMY, AS DIRECTOR OF CABINET, MINISTER, AND VICE PRESIDENT. HE SAID THAT IF GABONESE PEOPLE ASKED HIM TO LEAVE PRESIDENCY, HE WOULD SAY THANK YOU AND GO. SOMEONE LIKE IDI AMIN IS CRAZY, ALWAYS GETTING INVOLVED

IN SILLY STUNTS WITH ENGLAND OR HIS NEIGHBORS, ALWAYS GIVING SPEECHES THAT SAY NOTHING, AND DOING NOTHING FOR PEOPLE. BONGO THEN ADDED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW IF HE WOULD ATTEND OAU MEETING IN KAMPALA BECAUSE OF RECENT ACTIONS OF AMIN.

6. IN DISCUSSING NORTH KOREAN INTERFERENCE IN GABONESE INTERNAL AFFAIRS, BONGO STATED THAT HE WOULD NEVER INTERFERE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY'S AFFAIRS. THUS, WHEN USG NOMINATED ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES UPSET OVER CHOICE. HOWEVER, BONGO BELIEVED DECISION UP TO USG. HE CERTAINLY WOULD BE UPSET IF SOMEONE TOLD HIM WHOM HE SHOULD NAME AS MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OR AS A PREFECT IN INTERIOR. THUS, IN SPITE OF SOME PEOPLE SAYING HE SHOULD NOT DO IT, BONGO RECEIVED ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIS WHEN HE WAS IN GABON RECENTLY AND HAD BEEN VERY PLEASED WITH VISIT.

7. CODEL'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER MEBIAME CUT SHORT BECAUSE CODEL HAD TO CATCH AIRPLANE FOR SAO TOME BUT MEBIAME EXPRESSED PLEASURE OVER CODEL'S VISIT TO GABON AND OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM TO MEET WITH CODEL. MINISTER OF PLAN ANCHOUEY GAVE DETAILED EXPOSE OF CURRENT AND PLANNED GABONESE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND MADE SEVERAL APPEALS FOR INCREASED AMERICAN ASSISTANCE AND INVESTMENT.

8. CODEL VISIT RECEIVED EXCELLENT LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE. SEVERAL ARTICLES APPEARED IN GABON MATIN, AND GABONESE RADIO ALSO HAD SEVERAL REPORTS ON VISIT, INCLUDING INTERVIEW WITH CONGRESSMAN DIGGS. TELEVISION ALSO PROVIDED COVERAGE, PARTICULARLY OF CODEL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT.

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9. VISIT SUCCESSFULLY GAVE CODEL INSIGHT INTO THINKING AT TOP LEVEL OF GABONESE GOVERNMENT, AND ALSO SERVED TO EMPHASIZE TO GOG CONTINUED AMERICAN INTEREST IN GABON, PARTICULARLY IN ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL AREAS. CODEL EMPHASIZED SEVERAL TIMES HIS WISH THAT MORE AMERICAN COMPANIES WOULD RECEIVED CONTRACTS FOR IMPORTANT GABONESE PROJECTS AND PROMISED TO CARRY THE GABON STORY BACK TO CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PEOPLE.
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